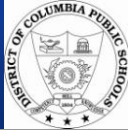


The Chancellor's Notes

August 15, 2008



Thoughts from Chancellor Rhee on learning, schools, and system-wide reforms in DC Public Schools

Principals and Teachers Get Ready For School

The first day of school is August 25th, and we are setting the pace for a year that engages, challenges and rewards our school leaders and teachers, who are doing the toughest and most rewarding jobs this city has to offer.

Principals are Ready

Every principal is responsible for supporting an entire school community toward significant academic growth in 2008 – 2009. Data on topics such as poverty, obesity, AIDS, and student achievement all show that meeting this expectation in DC is more challenging than in any other school district in the country. But many leaders are already making it happen. When an entire school community is galvanized to advance student achievement, we see remarkable results no matter what the challenges are.

This summer we filled our remaining principal vacancies and have principals for all 121 of our schools. After a national recruitment campaign last year, we have 46 new principals this year.

Principals' Leadership Conference



Paige Hoffman shares information from the Office of Data and Accountability with L. Nelson Burton, principal of Coolidge SHS

This week we pooled city resources and the work of hundreds of experts together in a conference to support our principals, assistant principals and all school leaders with the tools they need to be successful this year. Our conference included a new, interactive component through the Principals' Fair. Taking full advantage of our mayoral governance structure and wrap-around support from other city agencies, principals spoke with city officials from the Office of the Deputy Mayor, Chief Technology Officer, Partnerships and Grants, Metropolitan Police Department, Child & Family Services, the Chief Financial Officer, Public Libraries, the Department of Health and Department of Mental Health.

Principals also touched every area of DCPS that affects their schools, including Human Resources, Academic Support, Teaching and Learning, Data and Accountability, and Communications. Principals talked to experts about special education reform and afterschool reforms that are expanding across the system this year. Post-conference surveys show that this collaborative piece was another productive and positive first for DCPS.

Collaboration and Professional Development Reform

This year's conference set the stage for a critical part of professional development reform: collaboration. This collaboration is two-tiered. One: it brings the city's and system's resources together to bear on all of the challenges that enter schools with our children. Two: it allows principals the opportunities they need to meet and share the practices that are most successful in overcoming challenge and spreading success across the District.

Teachers Are Ready

We are depending on our teachers to increase the academic growth of every student in their classrooms this year. To give them what they need to meet this expectation, this year we are bringing every resource we have to support their professional growth.

New Teacher Orientation

We welcomed new teachers to DCPS this week with a New Teacher Orientation at Bell Multicultural High School. The challenges of the first year of teaching—especially in urban school districts—make teaching a high 'burn-out' profession. This week's induction for new teachers marked the beginning of a more intensive support model for our first-year teachers:

- New Teacher Orientation provided support on everything from classroom management strategies to information about DC Standards and the resources teachers can use to meet our standards through engaging instructional practices.
- In our highest need schools, we are increasing the number of teacher mentors who will be working closely with new teachers all year.
- Research tells us that literacy and math developers have a significant impact on the quality of instruction in schools. They work with teachers closely, providing feedback and collaborating on best instructional practices. Next year all of our schools will have literacy and math professional developers to support our teachers.

Professional Development: Increasing Teacher Effectiveness in the Classroom in 2008-2009

All teachers will be in schools next week to begin this process for the year. For new and returning teachers, we are digging deeper into the tougher reforms to continue the growth we saw last year. These reforms will include a common sense and collaborative professional development model to meet all teachers where they are. Whether novices or experts, all teachers will be challenged to higher levels of professional achievement.

Welcome Back Event

I look forward to continuing the momentum of this week with a Welcome Back Event for teachers on August 22nd. At the Washington Convention Center, we will welcome our teachers back as we never have before. We will celebrate the successes of 2007 – 2008, build on the momentum that began last year, set expectations for the year ahead, and honor our teachers for their work. There may even be some surprises...

Even for the most gifted, skilled and innovative teachers, it takes hard work to dramatically increase student achievement no matter what the challenges are. I look forward to rewarding the hard work that every student needs from his or her teacher this year. I invite all of our school communities to meet the high expectations our principals and teachers will be setting on August 25th.



Interim HR Director Pete Weber finalizes staffing at Moore Academy SHS with Principal Reginald Elliott